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Frances the Suffragette

Agnes Hyde



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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA

Frances the Suffragette

A Comedy in Three Acts

BY

Agnes Hyde



PHILADELPHIA
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Frances the Suffragette

CAST OF CHARACTERS

FRANCES OLIVER	<i>a Suffragette from the city</i>
SOPHIA JENKINS		
CAROLINE SPRUCE, <i>postmistress</i>	}	<i>the village "merry widows"</i>
FLORENCE WILKINS	. . . . .	<i>cousin to Frances</i>
MADELINE HARDWICK	}	
ROSAMOND CUMMINGS	. . . . .	<i>belles of the summer colony</i>
RUTH SOMERS		
MRS. JONES	. . . . .	<i>Cy's wife</i>
SIS BARKER	. . . . .	<i>Charlie's "gal"</i>
LUCY ANN	. . . . .	<i>Caroline's "little gal"</i>
DR. WILSON	. . . . .	<i>the new physician</i>
CY JONES	. . . . .	<i>a farmer, and the constable</i>
SETH BROWN	. . . . .	<i>a farmer, and a widower</i>
HAM THOMPSON	. . . . .	<i>from "The Four Corners"</i>
CHARLIE FULLER	. . . . .	<i>the rural delivery clerk</i>
SAM JUDKINS	. . . . .	<i>Wilkins' hired man and footman pro tem.</i>
DEACON PENNIMAN.		

TIME OF PLAYING :—Two hours.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—The village post-office.—A summer shower and the arrival of Frances.

ACT II.—Interior of Wilkins home.—Miss Oliver's reception; the uplifting is begun.

ACT III.—Garden at Wilkins' house.—The next day.—The aftermath.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Frances Oliver has broken her engagement to Dr. Wilson because of her devotion to the suffrage cause. She has been recently a "militant" in London, and is now returning to her native village in America, and before a group of the neighbors in the post-office declares her intention to "set the women of the village free." She is embarrassed by finding that Dr. Wilson has come to live in the village, but persists in her mission. She arouses the women, who defy the men, and smash windows in protest, among them those of the doctor's office. Cy Jones, village constable, proposes to arrest all the women, including two lively "widders." Some of the men, among them the doctor, come to the rescue. Frances finds she still loves him and admits that she needs a man's protection, after all. Both the "widders" find mates, the prosecution is withdrawn, and the men cheer the women.

COSTUMES, ETC.

FRANCES. Act I, modern traveling costume and carries leather bag. Act II, elaborate evening dress. Act III, pretty summer dress with hat and parasol. Frances is a graceful and charming society woman, and should not be played in a mannish manner.

FLORENCE, RUTH, MADELINE AND ROSAMOND. Act I, stylish summer dresses. Act II, simple evening dresses. Act III, summer dresses.

CAROLINE AND SOPHIA. Act I, house dresses. Act II, countrified muslin dresses. Act III, same as first, or "countrified" summer dresses.

SIS BARKER AND MRS. JONES. Act II, countrified "best frocks." Act III, countrified summer dresses. Sis should be dressed girlishly.

LUCY ANN. Child's white dress with pinafore. Hair arranged in childish manner with large ribbon bows.

SETH. Wears blond wig and chin whiskers. Act I, over-

alls and wide straw hat. Act II, loud checked suit. Act III, same as first or second.

CY. Wears black beard. Act I, dresses similar to Seth. Act II, old-fashioned dress suit. Swallow-tailed coat too short in back and sleeves. Act III, every-day suit, with policeman's badge and "billie."

DR. WILSON. Act I, summer business suit. Act II, evening suit. Act III, same as first, with cane.

CHARLIE. Mail carrier's uniform.

HAM THOMPSON. Sporty suit, with flashy tie.

DEACON PENNIMAN. Act II, old-fashioned Prince Albert coat with black or light trousers and vest. Act III, same, with old-fashioned tall hat. Gray side whiskers.

SAM JUDKINS. Act II, footman's uniform. Act III, wears part of footman's uniform, but old coat and farmer's wide straw hat.

PROPERTIES

CAROLINE, post-cards, letters, wrapped papers, etc. FLOR-ENCE, glass of water. CY, cup of coffee. SETH, piece of pie. HAM, whole boiled potato. LUCY ANN, drum. FRANCES, bag, parasol. CHARLIE, two letters, sealed.

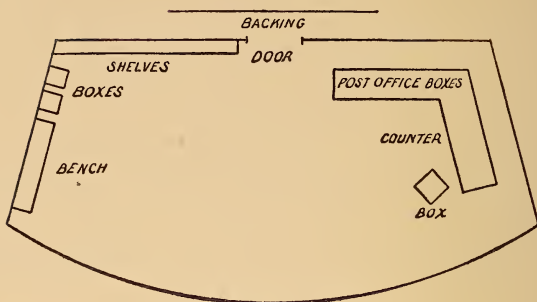
For all women and girls, banners, flags, badges, etc., bearing words, "Votes for Women."

Glass crash, heard off stage.

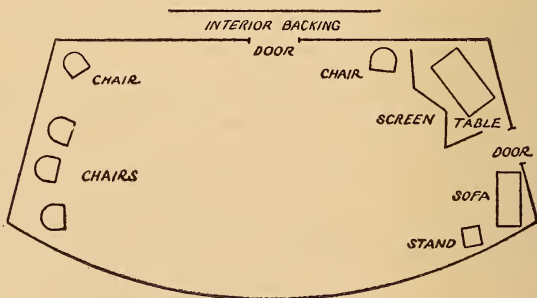
Supper table in Act II should be fully set, with real food, biscuits, butter, cake, pie, etc. The coffee served should be hot.

Sound of rain is made by slowly shaking dried peas or shot on drum-head. Thunder made by shaking sheet iron, and stroke on bass drum. Lightning flash with electric torch, or suddenly uncovering bright lantern behind scenes.

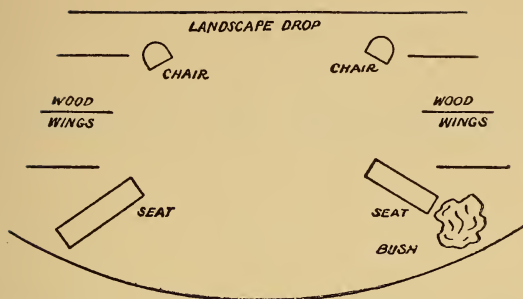
SCENE PLOTS



ACT I. Scene, village post-office. Door up c. Window in wall R., if preferred. Post-office boxes and mail window up L. Counter L. Chair or box near counter L. Bench R. There may also be placards on walls, and goods displayed on shelves, counter, in boxes, barrels, etc., to represent country store.



ACT II. Scene, a parlor well-furnished. Doors c. and L. Chairs down R., up R., and L., as shown. Screen up L. hides supper table, or table may be brought in when needed. Sofa and small stand down L. Potted plants, etc., for decoration if desired.



ACT III. Scene, garden of country house. Garden seats down R. and L. Two garden chairs up L. and R. Bush down extreme L. Other garden settings as desired.

If preferred, by slight changes in lines the interior setting of Act II may be used instead.

Frances the Suffragette

ACT I

SCENE.—*The village post-office. Post boxes and stamp window up L. Counter L. Bench down R. If desired goods may be displayed in boxes, barrels, on shelves, on counter, etc., to give appearance of country store. Placards, handbills, etc., on walls.*

CAROLINE SPRUCE (*behind counter L., sorting mail*). My, them Wilkinses gits a lot of mail. Ma Wilkins had three letters this morning, and now here's a pitcher post-card from the city for Miss Florence. Land sakes, I don't see how they git to know so many in the city. (*Looks at picture on card.*) Flatiron building? Must be a laundry. How on airth people walks up all them stairs, to say nothing about doing an ironing when they git to the top, beats me. Wonder where they hang their clothes? (*Turns card over and reads.*) "Dear Florence: I am looking forward to my promised visit with much pleasure. You will be surprised and, I hope, glad to learn that I am coming sooner than expected. I got back from London on Saturday. If all goes well I will be with you on the twenty-fifth. I have great plans for the uplifting, improvement and enlightenment of my native village. With love, Frances Oliver." Well, I declare! We are all gonna be uplifted, improved, and enlightened. Frances Oliver? Wonder who she is? Just back from London, hey? Well, well.

(*Enter SOPHIA JENKINS, C.*)

SOPHIA. How de do, Caroline? Looks like rain. I hope to goodness it will hold off a spell. Got my washing all on the line. Seems like I never wash but it rains.

(*Sits near post-office window.*)

CAROLINE. Wall, we need the rain bad enough. Hain't no water in the cisterns up to the house. How be you, Sophia?

SOPHIA. Wall, I hain't exactly myself this morning, Caroline. (*Confidently.*) I'd had another offer of marriage.

CAROLINE. You don't say!

SOPHIA. Yes. This makes the fifth within three weeks. How many you had, Caroline?

CAROLINE. Wall, I hain't one to talk about my heart affairs, but I guess I can go you one better.

SOPHIA. Who's your latest?

CAROLINE. Ham Thompson, from the Four Corners.

SOPHIA. I don't believe it! He told me I was the only one he ever loved—and axed me to be hisn this blessed morning on the front porch.

CAROLINE. Wall, all I got to say is that you wouldn't have had no fifth proposal if I had said yes at the Grangers' picnic last week.

SOPHIA. You always was a designing critter, Caroline. Hain't none of the men safe when you're around.

(*Enter CHARLIE FULLER, c. He stands at door, grinning.*)

CAROLINE. Wall, I let my fust git cold affore I began casting my eyes around for a second, and that is more'n could be said fer some folks I could name.

SOPHIA (*rising*). If you mean me, Caroline, I——

(*CHARLIE dances in whistling "Merry Widow Waltz."*)

CHARLIE. Oh, these merry widders! 'Spect I'll have to propose myself before long. Eh, Sophia?

(*Chases her about room and tries to kiss her. CHARLIE should be played as a merry, boyish character, fond of teasing.*)

SOPHIA (*beating him with sunbonnet*). You go 'long, Charlie, or I'll tell your father.

CAROLINE. You better be careful, Charlie. She might git up a breach of promise suit.

CHARLIE (*sitting on chair or box, extreme R.*). You better be getting along home, Mis' Jenkins. There's rain coming, sure. I thought it would catch me before I got my route finished. Just got my wheel fixed, too; thought

I was a-gonna get a chance to use it this afternoon. Now I suppose I'll have to splash through the mud for a week.

(*Enter SETH BROWN, C.*)

SETH (*looking off*). Well, thank goodness, it looks like we was a-gonna git some rain. I've tomato plants, and cabbages, and sallary, and letuceses all a-growing to spindles, waiting for a shower to set 'em out in. If there hain't no hitch in this one I may save 'em yet, but if them clouds don't mean rain I'm a ruined man.

(*Sits on bench R., next to CHARLIE'S chair.*)

SOPHIA. Wall, I sartenly hope it won't rain, with my washing on the line. (*Sits on chair up L., near counter.*)

CAROLINE. Seth Brown, who's Frances Oliver?

SOPHIA (*eagerly*). Why, ain't that the young woman the' was so much talk about in the papers?

CAROLINE. In the papers! Land sakes. What did she do?

SOPHIA. Why, she was took up in London fer smashin' winders.

CAROLINE. You don't mean she's one of them suffragettes?

SETH (*excited*). That's it—that's it. I remember now. We was all talkin' about it over to Four Corners one day. Why, she's the daughter of old Pop Oliver—used to live here. Why, I guess she was born here.

CAROLINE. That's what she says. She's cousin to the Wilkineses. An' she's comin' here to eddicate us an' polish us up.

SETH. You don't say? Wall, I'm glad on it. I'm thinking of eddicating my sister's gal, and I'll git a chance to see what polishing up is like. How'd you know she's coming?

CAROLINE. You hain't no call to ax that question, Seth Brown. If folks don't want things known they needn't write 'em on post-cards.

SOPHIA. Better not send any more love cards through this office, Seth.

CHARLIE. Unless you send them to the postmistress.

(*All laugh.*)

SETH. Don't care if I do, eh, Caroline?

(*All laugh.*)

SOPHIA. There now, she's pleased. She's been a-wanting ye to say that.

CHARLIE. Oh, these widows !

(*Enter CY JONES, C.*)

CY (*angrily*). I'll be blamed if it hain't a-gonna rain ! I've fifty ton of hay all ready to come in. I've all the men and hosses at work on it now, but they can't git it in affore that cloud comes up, nohow. If that hay's spiled I'll have to mortgage the place or sell out.

(*Goes to office window L. and gets mail.*)

SETH. Now what's the use of talking that way, Cy ? Hain't we farmers been jest a-waiting for this rain ?

CY (*sitting on bench R.*). Now, look-a-here, Seth. If you think I'm gonna git my hay all spoiled for the sake of your measly crops, ye're mistaken.

SOPHIA. Yes, and what about my washing, Seth Brown ?

CAROLINE. Land sakes, I'm glad I don't have to say whether it will rain or not !

(*Enter hurriedly, C., MADELINE HARDWICK, FLORENCE WILKINS, ROSAMOND CUMMINGS and RUTH SOMERS.*)

RUTH (*at door, looking off*). It is coming, sure. Just look at that cloud !

ROSAMOND. How are we going to get home ?

FLORENCE. Our dresses will all be ruined !

MADLINE. Our strawberries are all drying up. This will help them if it is much of a shower.

CAROLINE. Wall, for my part I'm glad on it. The cisterns up to the house are all dry. I hope it will rain for a week.

FLORENCE. Oh, horrors ! And the Methodist lawn party comes to-night.

CAROLINE. Miss Florence, you jest come in time. Here's a pitcher post-card from your Cousin Frances. (*Gives card.*)

FLORENCE (*after reading card*). Oh, girls, what sport ! Cousin Frances is coming here to uplift, improve and enlighten the village.

(*As she speaks the girls gather around her, L. C., and look at card.*)

SOPHIA. How's she gonna improve us? Hain't we got a Village Improvement Society here a'ready?

CY. Wonder what she's gonna uplift? S'pose she's gonna try her hand at that land boom over to the Four Corners?

(*All laugh.*)

SETH. Like to know how she's gonna enlighten the village. S'pose she's gonna put up them air 'lectric lights?

(*All laugh.*)

FLORENCE. Well, we're in for something exciting, that's sure. Girls, she's a suffragette—the militant kind. She's just back from London.

MADELINE. Oh, lovely. Did she see any of that window smashing?

SOPHIA (*grimly*). Wall, I should say she did. She was put in the lock-up for it. Pretty doin's, I say.

FLORENCE (*smiling*). Oh, Frances does nothing by halves. She's for the Cause, heart and soul. (*Looks at card.*) She says she will be here on the twenty-fifth.

RUTH. Why, that's to-day!

MADELINE. And the coach must be almost in from Millerstown!

ROSAMOND. And here comes the rain! (*Rain and distant thunder heard.*) Just listen to it!

FLORENCE. Oh, the Methodist lawn party!

CHARLIE. Hang it, not a chance to use my wheel for a week!

CY. There goes fifty ton of hay!

SOPHIA. And my washing!

MADELINE. Our strawberries will be saved.

SETH (*in delight*). Hurrah, hurrah, my plants are saved! My plants are saved!

CAROLINE. And our cisterns will be all filled up. The dry spell is broken.

FLORENCE (*looking through window*). Good gracious! There's the stage, and here comes Cousin Frances now! Open the door quick; she will be drenched! (*FLORENCE runs out c., and reënters c., with FRANCES OLIVER, who is shaking rain from garments.*) Oh, Cousin Frances, I am so sorry—I only just now got your post-card—and this awful rain—and no one to meet you——

FRANCES. There, there, Florence, you cannot help the delayed mails nor the rain either. The men who run our railroads are responsible for the first, and nature for the elements. But nature never made those roads out there. Three minutes' rain and mud everywhere. (*Turns to the men.*) Are there any selectmen here?

(*The men have risen and are standing staring at her.*)

CY (*pushing SETH forward*). Seth, here, is one of our leading lights.

FLORENCE. Miss Oliver, Mr. Jones, Mr. Brown.

(FLORENCE *bows*.)

CY. Own up like a man, Seth.

SETH. Wall, I calkilate I have had the honor to be voted in for this deestrick.

FRANCES. Well, why don't you do something about those roads?

SETH. Well, you see, miss, yer can't fix things up all to once. Can't take the bread and butter out of people's mouths. If we fixed them roads up too slick they wouldn't need no repairing, and then where would we be?

FRANCES. Just like the men. They never can give a straight answer. Bad roads are nothing but a joke to them. (*Turns to the women.*) But we women have the power to change all this. I am here to sow the seeds of a mighty future even in this little village, and may we and all our sister women in the wide world live to see and reap the harvest. Votes for Women! is my motto!

CAROLINE. Wall, she's a suffragette, all right.

SOPHIA (*to CAROLINE*). They don't git many proposals, do they?

(CAROLINE *shakes head*.)

RUTH. Oh, girls, a suffragette right here in our midst!

MADELINE. And dressed so stunningly, too.

ROSAMOND. Yes, right up to date. I am half converted already.

FRANCES. There's a suffrage amendment to be voted on in this state in the fall. Are you working for it?

(*Points to SETH.*)

SETH (*confused*). Who, me, ma'am? I—I ain't heard about it.

FRANCES (*C., girls in group L.*). Well, you will. You'll hear a lot about it. That's what I'm here for! This, my native village, shall come out into the sunlight. It shall be improved, uplifted and enlightened, and justice shall be done to all!

CY. Land er Goshen, Seth, ye're a politician; what's she a-talking about?

SETH. Blamed if I know. I've heered as how all the women were a-going crazy, and I believe it now.

CHARLIE. Hope she ain't gonna find no fault with the rural delivery system.

(*RUTH and other girls get mail at counter and open it giggling down L., during the following dialogue.*)

RUTH. Isn't this a lark!

FLORENCE. I'm not sure I like to hear a cousin of mine talking that way in public. (*Goes to her.*) Frances, don't you think we had better go home? The rain is about over.

CY. Rain let up, has it? Then I may save a few loads of hay yet.

(*Exit, c.*)

SETH. And hain't I a-gonna git them plants out after all?

(*Rises and stretches. FRANCES goes up to door c.*)

FRANCES (*at door c.*). What, out into all that mud? Never! (*Comes back to c.*) Will some one please call a taxi?

ALL (*except CHARLIE and SETH*). A taxi?

CHARLIE (*with the others*). A what?

SETH (*with the others*). For the land's sake!

FLORENCE. Cousin Frances, we do not have taxicabs here. You are not in the city now, you know.

FRANCES. No taxicabs? Then what do you do when you want to go anywhere?

SETH. Wall, I reckon we hitch up a rig, or walk.

FRANCES. Come, then, let us run between the showers.

SETH. I calkilate you won't run fur in them high heels.

FRANCES. Did I not say that this village needed improvement? No taxicabs—and the men pass sarcastic re-

marks upon the women's wearing apparel. I must attend to their manners, too, it seems. (*Goes to door.*) Well, if we must walk, we must. (*She pauses at door c., points off R., and speaks to FLORENCE in a startled manner.*) Oh, who is that man crossing over the street?

FLORENCE. Why, that is Dr. Wilson—he's our new physician.

FRANCES (*aside and coming down R.*). Dr. Wilson? Who would have dreamed of his being away up here in this tiny village? I must not meet him!

SOPHIA. I reckon he's a-going to visit Deacon Penniman. Poor man, he hain't had a day's health sence he lost his wife. He needs cheering up more'n medicine.

CHARLIE. Why don't you try and lighten up his spirits, Sophia? Wouldn't be a bad match.

(*Girls laugh.*)

SOPHIA. You go 'long, Charlie.

CAROLINE. You come in here, Charlie, and help me git the doctor's mail ready. He'll be coming in here after it, and you know he hain't got no time for fooling.

(*CHARLIE goes behind counter L.*)

FRANCES. Oh, Florence, that man—Dr. Wilson—I can't meet him.

FLORENCE. Why, Cousin Frances, you don't mean—he isn't the Dr. Wilson you were engaged to?

FRANCES. Yes. Is there no other door into the street but this one? (*Points to door c.*)

FLORENCE. No; I'm sorry.

FRANCES. Let us hurry, then, before the rain comes again.

(*They go toward door c. DR. WILSON enters c. He pauses as he sees FRANCES.*)

DR. W. (*in astonishment*). Frances!

FRANCES (*going close to him and speaking in low, intense tone*). Believe me, I did not know you were here.

DR. W. Do not distress yourself. We shall meet as perfect strangers hereafter.

(*He bows, goes to counter L., and gets mail.*)

FRANCES. I bid you all good-afternoon, friends, and

hope to see you all at my reception this day week, when I intend to begin my campaign of improvement.

(She starts to go out door. Rain begins again heavily. FRANCES pauses.)

(Enter CY C., and goes about wringing hands.)

CY. My hay! My hay!

SETH *(dancing a jig)*. My plants are saved! My plants are saved!

SOPHIA. Oh, my washing, my washing!

CAROLINE. Now there'll be water in the cisterns!

FLORENCE. Oh, those poor lawn party people!

CHARLIE. No chance to use my wheel for a week!

MADLINE. Now we shall get some strawberries!

RUTH.

ROSAMOND. } Our dresses will be ruined!

FRANCES *(up C., astonished)*. What is the matter with all these people?

CAROLINE. Wall, you see, the girls don't want it to rain because they want to show their pretty dresses at the lawn party to-night—an' Seth Brown he wants it to rain because he's got a million plants more or less to set out—an' Cy he don't want it to rain because he's got fifty ton of hay ready to bring in—an' Sophia she don't want it to rain because her washing is all on the line—an' I want it to rain because the cisterns up to the house are all dry—an' Charlie he don't want it to rain because he wants to use his wheel—an' Madeline ———

FRANCES *(interrupting)*. Mercy, what a tangle! Now, my friends and sisters, let me impress this upon you. When all the weather-clerks are women we shall know what the weather is going to be at least a week in advance, and everybody can make plans in safety. There will be no such confusion as this. Votes for Women!

(Rain grows heavier. Thunder and lightning. All repeat speeches as before, but all together, making a pandemonium.)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE.—FRANCES' reception. *Parlor at the Wilkins home. Room well furnished and with taste. Doors L. and up C. Three chairs R., one down extreme R., and one up L. Small stand down extreme L. Small chair, higher than others, in corner up R. Supper table may be set ready in corner up L., or it may be ready in wings and pushed forward when supper is announced. If set in corner it may be concealed by a screen until it is needed and then pushed to center by SAM JUDKINS. Further directions regarding supper table will be found later on in act.*

SETH (*entering c.*). Reckon I'm early. Don't seem to be nobody 'round here yet. (*Comes down c.*) Now if Caroline or Sophia would only happen in it would be a good chance to pop the question. I've made up my mind that I'm a-gonna git one of them widders. I don't care much which. I'll just ask the fust one I git a chance to pop to.

SOPHIA (*entering L.*). Land sakes, Seth, you here so soon? (SETH *looks pleased.*) I'm a-helping Miss Florence out, 'cause Pa and Ma Wilkins was called over to Millers-town, and they can't git back in time, nohow. Thought I heard some one in here. (*She straightens chair down R.*)

SETH (*getting chair L. and placing it near hers down R.*). Set down, Sophia. (SOPHIA *sits.*) I was jest a-wishing you'd come in. (*Sits in chair near SOPHIA.*) I was a-wanting to say something to ye, Sophia.

(*Draws chair a little nearer.*)

SOPHIA (*aside*). Gracious! I believe I'm a-gonna git another proposal. (*Very sweetly.*) What were you a-gonna say, Seth?

SETH (*drawing chair a little nearer*). Wall, I was jest a — You see, Sophia, I thought—I mean I was a-gonna—I was a-thinking—that—that — (*In a sudden burst.*) Sophia, I hain't had a decent square meal sence Jerusha died.

SOPHIA (*drawing chair a little nearer and speaking very sweetly*). Yes, Seth? Now, that's too bad.

SETH (*drawing chair a little nearer at every pause*). And ye see—that is, I thought—perhaps—I was a-gonna—and—and—— (*Another burst.*) And there don't seem to be no buttons on anything.

SOPHIA (*sweetly, looking into his face, chairs near together*). Yes, Seth? (*A pause.*) What was you goin' to say, Seth?

SETH (*jumping up and going up L.*). Gosh, it ain't no use! I can't pop with her a-looking at me so. Guess I'll wait for Caroline.

SOPHIA (*aside*). Ain't he the provoking thing! Thought I was a-gonna git a chance to tell Caroline I had another proposal. (*Looks L.*) Oh, Seth, here comes Miss Oliver and Florence. She got on one of them dresses jest like the fashion plates. (*Goes up L. to him.*) Land sakes, Seth, maybe we hain't dressed right for a swell reception.

SETH. Now, look-a-here, Sophia, I got on my best suit of clothes. Hiram Watkins says he hain't never turned out a better, an' I'll be blamed if I'm a-gonna put on low necks and short sleeves for anybody. (*Chuckles.*)

(*Enter FRANCES and FLORENCE, L.*)

FRANCES. Oh, how nice the parlor looks, Mrs. Jenkins.

SOPHIA. Well, I guess 'tain't the fust time I've fixed up for company. (*To SETH, who stands in embarrassed attitude.*) Seth Brown, come here and make your bow to the ladies.

(*FLORENCE moves down L. in front of sofa. FRANCES is on her right, a little up stage. SETH comes down L.*)

FRANCES. I'm glad to see you, Mr. Brown.

(*SOPHIA goes R. and sits, spreading her skirts with a great show of being perfectly at home. There is a vacant chair at her left.*)

SETH. How de do, Miss Oliver? (*FRANCES offers high hand-shake. SETH, looking around at SOPHIA, does not see her hand, but gropes for low hand-shake. Looks up, sees hand, looks surprised, then shakes. Greets FLORENCE also.*) The hired man, who was so dressed up I did not know him

at fust, told me where to put my hat and then I came in here. Thought mabby I'd find some one.

(SAM enters C. and stands stiffly left of doorway as he announces guests. He stands until guest has passed him, then exits. This business is repeated every time he makes an announcement.)

SAM (left of door C.). Cy Jones and wife.

(Enter CY and MRS. JONES. SETH goes R. as CY enters. He gets chair R. and places it right of SOPHIA and sits. SAM exits. CY comes down C. with wife on arm to FRANCES. She offers high hand-shake. He takes hand and shakes it vigorously up and down. MRS. J. also shakes hands. She is on CY's right.)

FLORENCE. You must shake hands with me too, Cy. You know I am receiving with Cousin Frances.

CY (shaking hands). Wall, I'm mighty glad to see ye, Florence, though it don't seem more'n ten minutes sence I seed ye afore.

(MRS. J. pulls him up R. C. by coat-tails.)

MRS. J. What'd she mean by "receiving," Cy? S'pose they expected us to bring presents?

CY. Blamed if I know.

(They stand up R. C. in embarrassed manner.)

MRS. J. What do we do now, Cy?

CY. I donno.

(FLORENCE and FRANCES converse, and so do SETH and SOPHIA.)

MRS. J. I most wisht I was to hum. I'd orter have on a low-necked dress like Miss Oliver and Florence.

CY. Reckon ye're all right, Hannah. There's Sophia Jenkins over there just got on her meeting frock. Guess she'd know how to dress. Them widders is up to everything.

(They go down R. to SOPHIA. CY tries to sit in chair beside SOPHIA. MRS. J. pulls him back. They sit down in chairs behind SOPHIA and SETH. As each guest is

announced they stare at them as they enter. They do not look when DR. W. is announced.)

SAM (*at door*). Mrs. Caroline Spruce and daughter.

(They enter ; SAM exits.)

FRANCES. How do you do, Mrs. Spruce?

CAROLINE (*shaking hands*). How de do, Miss Oliver? How de do, Florence? I'm glad to see ye. Lucy Ann, hold up your head, and shake hands with Miss Oliver. This is my little gal.

LUCY ANN. Ma, can't I take off my pinafore? Hain't nobody else got 'em on.

CAROLINE. 'Spect Lucy Ann's afraid folks won't think she's dressed up 'cause she's got her pinafore on. But she's got her best white dress on underneath. You see, Miss Oliver, she's one of them careless gals. I'm a-washing and a-ironing for her all the hull time. I thought as how there'd mabbe be something to eat here and she'd better wear her pinafore and keep her dress clean. Now, Lucy Ann; you go set down. (LUCY ANN *crosses R., and sits in chair left of SOPHIA.*) No, don't set in that chair. Some of the big folks'll want that chair. You set in that little chair over in the corner.

LUCY ANN. I don't want to set in the corner, ma!

CAROLINE. Now you be a good gal and do jest as I tell ye, Lucy Ann. (*Takes her over to chair in corner up R.*) Don't stick yer feet out so, and hold up yer head. Don't look so scart. Hain't nobody gonna hurt ye. There now, you set still.

LUCY ANN. I don't want to set still, ma!

CAROLINE. Now you be a good gal, and do as I tell you.

SETH (*aside*). Never saw such a careful mother as Caroline. Reckon there wouldn't be no buttons off if I could git her.

(CAROLINE *comes down and sits in chair left of SOPHIA. They greet each other. SETH greets CAROLINE.*)

SAM (*at door*). Miss Rosamond Cummings, Miss Ruth Somers, and Miss Madeline Hardwick.

(They enter ; SAM exits.)

FRANCES. Ah, Florence, it is on such as these the future of our sex depends.

ROSAMOND (*coming down L., and shaking hands*). Oh, Miss Oliver, we have been longing for this night to come, ever since our talks with you on the great subject.

(*Passes to FLORENCE.*)

RUTH (*shaking hands with FRANCES*). You have converted us all. We wait only the opportunity to break the trammels of the past.

FRANCES. The opportunity is near at hand.

(*RUTH passes to FLORENCE.*)

MADELINE (*to FRANCES*). Let us hold up your hands in this great work.

FRANCES. There will be work for all in the campaign for the suffrage amendment.

(*MADELINE passes to FLORENCE. The three girls and FLORENCE are thus grouped down extreme R.*)

SAM (*at door*). Mr. Charles Fuller and his gal.

(*CHARLIE and SIS BARKER pause in doorway in lover-like manner during SOPHIA'S speech.*)

SOPHIA (*rising*). Why, there's Charlie, and he's got his gal with him. (*SETH rises.*) Now they'll do nothing but spoon the hull evening.

(*CHARLIE and SIS enter C. and come down to FRANCES. They shake hands with her and with FLORENCE, and talk to girls during CAROLINE'S speech.*)

CAROLINE. Land sakes, he's got his uniform on. He'd ought to worn his Sunday clothes. He's so scart folks won't know he's the rural delivery clerk that he wears his uniform the hull time.

(*SIS pulls CHARLIE C.*)

SIS. What'd that man go and shout out "Charlie Fuller and his gal" for? I think he's just horrid!

CHARLIE. Well, hain't you my gal?

SIS. Course I be.

CHARLIE. Well, what'd you want to hide it for?

SIS. But there hain't no need to shout it out so. It makes me feel shamed.

CHARLIE (*putting arm about her*). Well, let's go over here and argue it out.

(*They go to divan up R.*)

SOPHIA. There, they're beginning a'ready. It 'most makes me sick.

CAROLINE. Wall, I reckon you can spoon a little yerself, Sophia, when you git the chance.

(*They talk and SOPHIA giggles frequently.*)

SAM (*at door*). Deacon Penniman.

(SAM *exits*. DEACON PENNIMAN *enters C. and comes down to FRANCES.*)

DEACON. How de do, Miss Oliver? How de do, Florence? How de do, young ladies? (*Sees SOPHIA and CAROLINE.*) Wall, if there hain't Sophia and Caroline. (*Goes to them.*) How de do, Caroline? How de do, Sophia? How de do, Cy? How de do, Mrs. Jones? How de do, Seth? How de do, everybody?

(*They all greet him and make much of him. DEACON, CY and SETH gather around widows. MRS. J. shows uneasiness.*)

SAM (*at door*). Ham Thompson, from the Four Corners.

(HAM THOMPSON *appears C., and talks to SAM during SOPHIA'S speech.*)

SOPHIA. Land sakes, Caroline, here's Ham Thompson! Why didn't you tell me he was a-coming?

CAROLINE. How'd I know?

(HAM *comes down to FRANCES.*)

HAM. How de do, Miss Oliver—Florence?

(*He shakes hands.*)

FRANCES. Mr. Thompson, are you going to work for the suffrage amendment?

HAM (*confused*). Why, you see—I, well, I ain't had time yet to ask any of the boys how they're goin' to vote.

FRANCES. If you want advice ask the girls.

MADELINE. Yes, you come to us, Mr. Thompson.

(*The girls beckon to him, laughing, but he backs away, half embarrassed. MRS. J. pulls CY R. and scolds him.*)

SOPHIA. My, don't Ham look swell, though? Come over here and set down, Ham.

HAM (*relieved*). Thanks. Guess I will.

(*He gets a chair and sits beside CAROLINE. MADELINE, RUTH and ROSAMOND go up R. C. and talk to CY.*)

FLORENCE. He means well, Frances, and he's quite a politician over at the Four Corners. I invited him because he is interested in the widows. If you convert them you'll get Ham, too.

FRANCES (*laughing*). Those two widows seem to be the center of attraction in this village.

SAM (*at door*). Dr. Wilson.

(*Enter DR. W. at door c. SAM exits.*)

FRANCES (*aside*). Dr. Wilson! I did not dream that he would come. (*Moves down L. and leans against stand.*)

FLORENCE. Why, what is the matter, Frances?

FRANCES. I feel ill.

FLORENCE. Let me get you some water.

(*Exit FLORENCE, L.*)

DR. W. (*coming down to FRANCES*). Good-evening, Miss Oliver.

FRANCES. So you came. I did not expect it.

DR. W. Yes, I came. I could not slight Miss Florence's invitation. I am only a struggling country doctor now, and must make friends.

FRANCES. Please leave me. Do not talk to me. (*He bows. FLORENCE returns with water.*) Ah, thank you, Florence. (*FRANCES drinks, then puts glass on stand. DR. W. greets FLORENCE, then goes up R. C. to girls.*) I did not think it would be so hard. I must not give way. I have my life-work to perform.

FLORENCE. Do you feel better now, Frances?

FRANCES. Yes, dear.

FLORENCE. Supper is ready.

FRANCES (*surprised*). Supper?

FLORENCE. Yes. I know it is not fashionable, but the majority of these good people would be embarrassed and uncomfortable with the city style of reception refreshments, and enjoy nothing so much as a good country "set down" supper, as they call it.

FRANCES (*crossing to guests*). My friends, supper is served.

(*At the word supper all are delighted. SAM brings table C. It is arranged up and down stage. FRANCES with FLORENCE sits up C. at head of table facing audience. LUCY ANN sits at front with back to audience. At right side, beginning at front, SETH, MADELINE, DR. W., RUTH, ROSAMOND, DEACON. At left, beginning at front, MRS. J., CY, SOPHIA, HAM, SIS and CHARLIE. If desired the curtain may be dropped while table is arranged. At rise of curtain all should be in their seats except LUCY ANN.*)

CAROLINE (*seating LUCY ANN*). Now, Lucy Ann, you set there. You be a good gal and don't eat too much.

LUCY ANN (*pointing*). Ma, can't I have some of that frosted cake?

CAROLINE. Now, Lucy Ann, you mind what I told you, and don't ax for nothing 'cept it's give to you fust. 'Sides, you got to eat plain food fust afore you git pie and cake. (*Tucks napkin under LUCY ANN's chin.*) Now, don't you go mussing yerself all up. Miss Florence, you set right still, an' Sophia an' me'll bring in the coffee and hot biscuit. Seth, you keep an eye on Lucy Ann, an' see thet she don't git into no mischief.

(*Exeunt CAROLINE and SOPHIA, L.*)

SETH. Don't you want a piece of pie, Lucy Ann?

LUCY ANN. My ma says I can't have no pie, 'cept I eat plain food fust. My pa used to give me pie.

CY. How'd you like a new pa, Lucy Ann?

LUCY ANN. Who'd he be?

CY. How'd Seth suit ye?

(*All laugh.*)

LUCY ANN. I donno. I'll ask my ma.

(*All laugh.*)

(*Enter SOPHIA and CAROLINE, L., with coffee and biscuits. SOPHIA stays left of table, CAROLINE goes right. They help both sides at the same time, so that when they reach the foot all have been served. As CAROLINE finishes she crosses L. to SOPHIA.*)

LUCY ANN (*as they enter with coffee and biscuits*). I want a hot biscuit, ma. Gimme a hot biscuit!

CAROLINE. Now, Lucy Ann, you wait till I git to your end of the table.

SOPHIA. My, that coffee's hot. It's all creamed, and you can sugar it yourself. Ain't that right, Miss Florence?

FLORENCE. Yes, Sophia.

(*All have started to eat.*)

FRANCES. Florence, they do not eat properly.

FLORENCE. Never mind, Frances, they are happy.

FRANCES. But I will mind, Florence. I came here to improve this village, and I cannot sit here and see them breaking the rules of table etiquette. (*SETH has been eating pie with a knife.*) Mr. Brown, I hope you will pardon me, but you know it is considered improper to eat pie with a knife. (*She has risen.*)

SETH. Land sakes, how's a fellow gonna eat it, then?

FRANCES. With a fork, of course. (*Cy has been drinking from his saucer.*) Mr. Jones, it is bad manners to pour your coffee into your saucer.

MRS. J. There. What'd I tell ye?

CY. But it's hot.

FRANCES. Then wait until it cools. (*HAM has a whole potato on his fork and is biting it.*) Mr. Thompson, you should not bite a whole potato so.

HAM. Wall now, Miss Oliver, dad allus ate 'em so, and it comes natural.

FRANCES (*to CHARLIE, who has been sitting with his arm around his girl feeding her with dainty morsels*). Mr. Charles Fuller, it is not proper to make love in public.

CHARLIE. But she's my sweetheart, Miss Oliver. 'Sides, she don't mind, do you, Sis? She ain't one of them women's rights gals, be ye, Sis?

SIS (*bridling*). Well, I guess I kin think as I like, can't I?

CHARLIE (*surprised*). Why, Sis!

FRANCES. There it is again—the masculine contempt for woman's mind. Don't you know that the day for ridicule and derision of woman has gone by? Now the fairest of our youth and beauty have banded themselves together to lift up our downtrodden sex. I have brought you together to-night that you might learn this fact. Yes, from ocean to ocean, and from continent to continent the heaven is working, and it will continue to work until from every city mart, from every country square, and from every isolated village will come the cry, Votes for Women! (*Girls applaud.*) Then will justice be done. Then no more will lovely woman be classed lower than the negro and the untutored immigrant to our shores. Then no longer will one-half of our community suffer taxation without representation. (*The girls applaud.*) Then will woman not only have the power to use her influence for good, but will be able to help reform and elevate all mankind, and to bear a part in all movements for the uplifting of the world.

CY. We thought when you fust come, Miss Oliver, that you was a-gonna uplift that land boom over to the Four Corners.

(*All laugh.*)

HAM. That's what I was told. Seth Brown, he told me so. But I knowed he was a-jokin'.

CY. It seems it's the world ye're a-gonna take a heave at, Miss Oliver. Wall, that's a pretty tough job. The men have been a-trying that for a good many centuries, and they hain't managed it yet.

FRANCES. No, nor ever will until woman is by their side in equalitv. She has labored for man in the past, but not by his side with equal rights. To her he owes all those gentle, refining influences which raise man above the sordid level. But for her he would sink into barbarism. I ask these men here, you Cy Jones, you Ham Thompson, you Seth Brown, where, where would man be to-day if it were not for woman?

SETH. Wall, now, I reckon he'd be in the garden of Eden, eating strawberries.

(*All laugh except FRANCES and the girls.*)

FRANCES. Always jest and ridicule. Friends, the time has come for action. We women want to know where we stand in this community. Now—how many of you gentlemen are going to work and vote for the suffrage amendment? Please hold up your hands.

(*The men look at each other alarmed. HAM looks at CAROLINE, who is standing R. She glares at him, and he starts timidly to put up his hand. Cy snatches it down.*)

CY. You ain't goin' to do no sech thing, Ham Thompson.

MRS. J. You let Ham be, Cy Jones.

(*CY looks at his wife in astonishment.*)

FRANCES. What—not one who is man enough to help us fight our cause? Well, we will show we are strong enough to win it alone. Sister suffragettes, I call on you for your support. (*Goes left of table. Girls rise.*)

FLORENCE (*getting up on chair*). At first I did not understand and was not interested, but since I have listened to my cousin's teachings the past week I realize that woman does not hold her just place in the world, and I take my stand beside Cousin Frances in this noble work.

ALL THE GIRLS AND FRANCES. Votes for Women!

(*FLORENCE gets down and goes L. to FRANCES.*)

ROSAMOND (*on chair*). Yes, let us unfurl the banner of progress! Let us be free and demand the ballot!

(*The girls should render these speeches in a very dramatic manner.*)

HAM. My gracious, girls, what's comin' now?

ALL THE GIRLS AND FRANCES. Votes for Women!

(*ROSAMOND goes to FRANCES.*)

RUTH (*on chair*). Away with oppression and servitude in all its forms! Let us wave the banner of equal rights! Never again shall woman be the slave of man!

ALL THE GIRLS AND FRANCES. Votes for Women!

(*RUTH goes to FRANCES.*)

MADLINE (*on chair*). Blessings have come to us from

Miss Oliver's visit. The very day of her arrival the long looked for rain came to us and watered the parched soil.

SETH. Wall, now, thet's so. My plants were all saved.

CY. But what about my hay? It warn't no good.

MADELINE. As the thirsty land drank in the life-giving moisture on that day, so we drink in the soul-stirring teachings of Miss Oliver, and we cry ——

ALL THE GIRLS AND FRANCES. Votes for Women !

(MADELINE goes to FRANCES.)

DR. W. (*springing to his feet*). Enough of this ! (*Comes down R. and confronts FRANCES down L.*) You have come here to cast a firebrand into this quiet community—to bring the discontent and unrest of the noisy city into this peaceful and happy village !

FRANCES. All the world must learn that woman is man's equal.

DR. W. When you say that woman is man's equal you are wrong. In all those finer qualities you spoke of she is his superior.

FRANCES. But not fit to be trusted with the ballot.

DR. W. When she wins the ballot she is no longer to be considered man's superior. What ! Shall we men, woman's natural protectors, hurl those whom we reverence, our wives, our sisters, our sweethearts, into the mire and calumny, the graft and dishonesty, of the polling booth and the political machine? Never !

FRANCES. No, never ! For when woman has the ballot there will be no mire and calumny, no graft and dishonesty. It will all be purified and elevated !

MRS. J. (*rising*). There, ye hear that, Cy Jones? I'm a-goin' to have a vote. (*Goes L.*)

CY (*holding her*). You ain't, neither. Come back here.

MRS. J. I am, I tell you. You lemme loose.

(*Pulls away and joins girls L.*)

ALL THE WOMEN. Votes for Women !

(SIS joins SOPHIA and CAROLINE R., and shouts with the other women.)

DR. W. Let me out of this Bedlam !

(*Exit excitedly C.*)

SETH (*laughing*). Wall, if the doctor hain't gone off mad. I don't see nothing to git mad about, do you, Cy?

CY. Blamed if I do. It's the best fun I've had for a month!

HAM. Beats the circus over to the Four Corners all to smash.

FRANCES. You hear, sisters? They will not take us seriously. But we must compel them to do so. There is only one way, force! No great movement was ever achieved in this world without force. Sister suffragettes, are you with me to the bitter end, if need be?

THE GIRLS. We are with you heart and soul!

FRANCES. And you, Caroline?

CAROLINE. Wall, I hain't got nothing agin the men. (*Men applaud.*) And I don't know as I'm a-hankering after the ballot, but I hain't a-going agin my sister women, no, siree.

(*She goes L., and is welcomed by FRANCES and girls with cheers. Men look crestfallen.*)

FRANCES. And you, Sophia?

LUCY ANN. I want to go, too, ma, I want to go, too!

CAROLINE. Wall, you got to be a good gal.

(*LUCY ANN runs to her.*)

FRANCES. And you, Sophia?

SOPHIA. Guess I'll go along, too. Reckon the men won't think none the less of us in the end.

(*She joins others and is welcomed.*)

FRANCES (*to Sis*). And you?

CHARLIE (*going to her with outstretched arms*). You won't never desert me, will you, Sis?

SIS. No, course not, Charlie, but I hain't gonna miss no fun! (*Runs to others and is welcomed.*)

FRANCES. On then, sisters, to our work; I have all prepared.

(*Exit, R.*)

ALL THE WOMEN (*as they exit*). Votes for Women!

SETH (*after their exit*). Wall, I'll be blamed!

CY. You can't do nothing with the women, Seth, you can't do nothing with the women.

CHARLIE. What am I a-gonna do without Sis?

(Crash of glass outside.)

SAM *(rushing in c.)*. They are smashing all the windows in Dr. Wilson's office, and he's furious! *(Rushes out. Another smash. He rushes in again.)* There goes Lem Wetherbee's grocery store windows! *(Another smash.)*

HAM *(the men have risen at entrance of SAM)*. Good land, what are we a-gonna do?

SETH. Cy, ye're the constable; go out and arrest those women.

CY. What! Out there? Never! I dasn't. You can't do nothing with the women. *(Drum heard.)* Land er Goshen, here they come!

(Men hide under table and behind chairs. Women enter c. with banners, mottoes, badges and flags. LUCY ANN heads the procession with a drum.)

ALL THE WOMEN *(shouting as they march)*. VOTES FOR WOMEN! WE DEMAND THE BALLOT! GIVE US EQUAL RIGHTS! WE ARE NOT SLAVES!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE.—*Garden at Wilkins home. Garden seats L. and R. Seats should hold three people each, no more. Two single garden chairs up L. and R. Bush down extreme L. If desired the lines may be slightly altered, and the interior scene of Act II be used.*

FRANCES (*entering down L., as though from house*). There is no one in sight. It may be safe to venture forth. I have not been out of the house all day, and I must get a breath of fresh air. (*Half opens parasol and goes up L.*) No, I must not go that way. That is the way to the village, and I might meet some one. I will take a walk down this lane. (*Opens parasol and starts R.*) Dear me, I forgot; Cy Jones lives down that lane. I dare not go that way. (*Comes down c.*) Dare not? Frances Oliver, you are afraid, actually afraid. (*Closes parasol, sits on bench R., and laughs.*) Afraid because you have broken a few windows. (*Laughs.*) Where are all the grand resolves you made in London? All your glorious exultation in your life-work? Gone! Swallowed up in a feminine fear of the village constable. (*Laughs.*) Well, I certainly have entered into my life-work. I have awakened the women of this village to a realization of the downtrodden condition woman has occupied for centuries. I am a full-fledged suffragette, with a following. But by the way, where is my following? I have not seen one of them since last night. Even Florence has deserted me. Are they afraid, too? (*Laughs.*) Well, it all goes to prove that woman has been kept in a servile condition so long! oh, so long! that even a slight attempt to assert her rights brings an aftermath of panic. (*MADLINE and RUTH enter R. MADLINE touches FRANCES on shoulder. FRANCES starts, turns, sees MADLINE.*) Oh, it is you, Madeline. I thought you were — (*Laughs.*) I thought you were the constable.

MADLINE. You mean Cy Jones. Ruth and I have been watching his house all day, waiting for a chance to slip over here. Saw him start for the village a few minutes ago, and we ran over here at once.

RUTH (*frightened*). What do you think they will do to us, Miss Oliver?

FRANCES. I am sure I do not know. Put us in the lock-up, probably. (*Laughs.*)

MADELINE. How can you laugh, Miss Oliver? Just think, if Archibald were to hear that I had been in jail he might break his engagement with me, and I should have to give back my lovely diamond ring.

(*Looks at ring and kisses it.*)

RUTH (*looking off up R.*). Here comes Rosamond.

ROSAMOND (*entering R.*). I have found you at last, Madeline. I have been hurrying after you all the way from the meadows. Saw you crossing the stile there. What are we going to do, Miss Oliver?

(FRANCES *shrugs shoulders.*)

FRANCES. Why not wait and see what the men do?

RUTH. Let us all go and hide somewhere.

MADELINE. I have an aunt over at Millerstown. We might go there.

RUTH. Whatever we do we must do quickly.

FLORENCE (*entering cautiously L., as from house*). I thought I heard you girls talking to Cousin Frances. I did not dare to come out until I was sure. Has anything happened? (*Anxiously.*)

ROSAMOND. Not yet.

RUTH. We are all going over to Millerstown to hide.

MADELINE. Yes, to my Aunt Kate's.

FLORENCE. For mercy sakes, hurry then. The men may be here any minute.

FRANCES. The men? (*Laughs.*) Oh, girls, just think how ridiculous it is. You who were so brave last night that you waved banners, smashed windows, and demanded your rights, are now afraid of a few men. What a parody on our sex. (*Laughs.*)

MADELINE. You may laugh if you want to, but for my part I see nothing to laugh at.

ROSAMOND. Nor I.

RUTH. Nor I.

FLORENCE (*coming close to FRANCES L.*). You are the

one who got us into this scrape, Cousin Frances. You must advise us.

MADLINE (*advancing on other side of FRANCES*). Yes, and if I lose my Archibald you will be to blame.

(RUTH and ROSAMOND *behind bench*.)

CAROLINE (*entering up L., with SOPHIA, SIS and MRS. J. She advances on FRANCES, L. FLORENCE is pushed behind bench*). And if I don't git voted in again as postmistress I'll hold you responsible!

SOPHIA (*pushing in between CAROLINE and FRANCES*). And if I don't git any more proposals, you'll wish you hadn't come here a-speechmaking.

SIS (*pushing in between SOPHIA and FRANCES*). And if I lose my Charlie I'll never forgive you; it will just break my heart! (*Sobs.*)

MRS. J. (*pushing in between SIS and FRANCES*). Maybe you think because I'm the constable's wife I hain't scart; but Cy he's mad clear through, and he'd shut me up in the lock-up as quick as wink.

(*They gather around FRANCES angrily.*)

FLORENCE. You are sitting there, Cousin Frances, not saying a word, but it is my opinion that you are as frightened as any of us.

FRANCES. Me afraid? Of what? Of a few men? Of Cy Jones, Seth Brown, Ham Thompson and the rest? Never! All this cowardly talk simply proves what I have been teaching. Woman has been kept in subjection so long that she has neither high ambition, courage, nor bravery to face her tyrants. (*Rises.*) Are you not ashamed to stand there and upbraid me? Me, who have sacrificed everything to the great cause? To tell me that I am afraid! After what I've seen and done in London? Why, I do not know what fear is. If I did have a few moments' dread my courage has all returned to me. Put all the blame on me! I am now ready to face anything!

ALL. Oh, you are brave, Miss Oliver!

MADLINE. You revive our courage.

FRANCES. Yes, I will go to jail if need be. Aye, even to the stake. (*Suddenly in great fear.*) Oh, I saw a snake run under that bush!

ALL (*in terror and drawing back*). A snake !

FRANCES. It was either a snake or a mouse !

ALL. A mouse !

(*Scream, jump on garden seats. FRANCES tries to get up, too, but there is no room. She runs about stage in fear.*)

FRANCES. Where are all the men ? Will they never come ? Scream louder, girls, I cannot ; I think I am going to faint.

MADELINE (*looking R.*). Mercy, here comes Dr. Wilson !

RUTH. Let us run !

FLORENCE. But the mouse ?

SOPHIA. Make a dash all together and it can't get us.

(*All but FRANCES run out L.*)

FRANCES (*following them up L.*). Don't leave me, girls ! Don't leave me !

DR. W. (*entering R.*). Frances !

FRANCES (*running to him*). Oh, I am so glad you came. There is a snake, or a mouse, or some dreadful creature under that bush. I saw it go under myself, and all those women ran away and left me.

DR. W. The women have deserted you, but one of the historic tyrants and oppressors of your sex is here and will protect you.

(*He makes this speech in a mock bombastic manner. Goes to bush and beats it with a cane.*)

FRANCES. Oh, it was a snake ! I saw it wriggle away down the lane. (*Sinks on bench R., exhausted.*) Oh, I am so glad you came.

DR. W. (*coming to her*). Well, I am glad that at last there is one occasion when you have expressed yourself as glad to see me. Frances, I came here to-day very angry and determined to help Cy Jones punish you women. But, Frances, when I see you—my heart melts. (*Sits beside her on bench.*) I wonder if we could ever again ——

FRANCES. There, there, Paul, do not get sentimental. You know we gave all that up over a year ago, when I went abroad.

DR. W. Yes, you did. To begin your "life-work," as you call it.

FRANCES. Why did you leave your practice in the city?

DR. W. (*who has risen*). Because I needed a rest, and because I couldn't remain and hear you spoken of as that "matchless woman" who had "given up everything for the cause." To hear you called a "wonderful politician" and a "great orator." The pity of the men was the worst. I think I could have stood even that, however, if I had not heard your name hawked about the city streets by the news-boys. Think of it, the name of my fiancée!

FRANCES (*going to him and putting her hand on his lips*). Hush, hush. Don't say that. They do not know here.

DR. W. Well, let them know it, and let me protect you. You need me, Frances—and I need you.

FRANCES. Hush, hush. Please go. Here they all come.

(*The women enter in a frightened group L. They are followed by CY, SETH and HAM. Women cross to R., behind bench. FRANCES is seated on bench R. once more. Men stay L.*)

(*Exit DR. W., down L.*)

CY (C.). I'm a-gonna settle this thing right here and now. Hain't a-gonna be no such times here as we had last night. Not while I'm constable.

SIS. Oh, I wish Charlie was here. I'm scart to death!

CY. Lem Wetherbee he's mad, an' Doc Wilson, he came over this morning and asked me to arrest those women, and I intend to do it. I hain't told none of the village about this here examination, 'cause we don't want no rabble here. I'm a-gonna give the women a fair show. Seth and Ham, ye're selectmen. I'll ax you to help me sift this durned affair.

CAROLINE. Seems to me ye're mighty brave to-day, Cy Jones. You didn't dast to touch us last night.

CY. Now, I hain't a-gonna take no back talk from you, Caroline Spruce. My wife has been a-bossing of me around for the last ten years, but this village hain't a-gonna be run by a passel of women. Seth Brown, I'll ax you a few questions fust.

(SETH comes to him.)

SOPHIA. Don't you dare say nothing agin us, Seth Brown.

CY. Sophia, you keep quiet. Hain't gonna be no intimidation of witnesses here. Seth, where were you last night?

SETH. Wall, I reckon I was at Miss Oliver's reception.

CY. What happened there?

SETH. Wall, we had a mighty fine supper for one thing.

CY. Now, Seth, don't you go a-gittin' fresh. You tell me what happened.

SETH. Nothing much, 'cept the women got up a little entertainment for us to liven things up a bit.

CY. Warn't there some window-smashing?

SETH. I didn't see none. Now you look-a-here, Cy, if you think I'm a-gonna help you put a lot of defenseless females in the lock-up, ye're making a big mistake.

(All the women except FRANCES applaud.)

CY. The law don't allow no window-smashing.

FRANCES (*rising*). Oh, the mockery of it. The law does not allow. I wonder at the blindness and injustice of man. Woman has nothing to do with the making of the laws, not one small voice. But she must keep them. Oh, yes, she must keep them, or man, who made them for her, will try her, condemn her, judge her, and finally be her jailer. Is it not hilariously amusing? Or it would be if it were not so serious. (*Sits.*)

CY. That will do, Miss Oliver. You hain't called upon to speak. Ham, where were you last night?

(HAM comes forward to CY; SETH goes L.)

HAM. At Miss Oliver's reception.

CY. Who was there?

HAM. Wall, the widders was there.

CY. Now, I hain't axing you about the widders. You tell me about the window-smashing and destruction of property.

HAM. I didn't see none.

CY. Wall, what did you hear?

HAM. My hearing hain't been very good sence I had that last spell of rheumatics, Cy.

CY. Hain't nobody here got the courage to stand up and tell the truth? Where's Deacon Penniman?

SOPHIA. He's gone to bed sick again. Says he hain't well enough to give no testimony.

CY. You women keep quiet. Where's Charlie Fuller?

CAROLINE. He's gone off on his route. You can't interfere with the United States mail, Cy Jones. Folks has got to git their letters, anyhow.

CY. Didn't I tell you women to keep quiet? When I want you to speak I'll tell ye. Bring in Sam Judkins, the hired man. He saw it all.

SETH. Reckon he's about a hundred miles from here by this time. He's gone off for his health.

CY. Seth Brown, you've been a-spiriting of the witnesses!

SETH (*shouting*). Prove it, Cy! Prove it!

(*Enter CHARLIE up L.*)

CAROLINE. For the land sakes, here's Charlie.

CY. You come just in time, Charlie. Maybe you'll help me settle this business.

CHARLIE. Well, let me attend to Uncle Sam's business first. (*Crosses R. to FRANCES.*) Miss Oliver, here's a special delivery letter for you. (*Gives letter.*) And one for you, too, Cy.

(*Goes to him. Gives letter. FRANCES and CY open letters.*)

FRANCES *looks pleased.* CY *looks angry.*)

CY. Land er Goshen! Listen to this. (*Reads letter aloud.*) "Cy Jones. I've just heered as how a lot of the women over to Hillsville went on some sort of a spree last night, and that ye're a-gonna put them in the lock-up. I've also heered that Caroline Spruce is one of the women. Now don't you dast lay a hand on Caroline. Maybe you don't know that she's a-gonna marry me. She said yes over a month ago, and I'm jest a-waiting for her to set the day. Now you mind what I say, Cy, or I'll bring the Millerstown Fire Department over and wipe Hillsville off the map. Hain't no fooling about this, Cy. Ben Hawkins, Postmaster, Millerstown."

(*Enter DR. W., quietly, down L.*)

SOPHIA. Caroline Spruce, I allus said you was a designing critter. How'd you git Ben Hawkins?

CAROLINE. Now, you look-a-here, Sophia. I told you I warn't one to talk about my heart affairs. Hain't no better match in the county than Ben Hawkins.

SOPHIA. I'll just go and git married myself, that's what I'll do.

HAM. That offer's still open, Sophia.

SOPHIA. All right, Ham, I'll take ye.

(They throw kisses at each other.)

SETH. And hain't I a-gonna git one of them widders after all?

CY. Now, see here, this hain't no matrimonial bureau. Land er Goshen! Does Ben Hawkins think I'm afraid of him? Wall, I hain't, nor the hull of Millerstown either. I'll put them women in the lock-up now, or ——

DR. W. *(going up L. C.)*. Cy Jones, we will stop this thing right now. I've just paid Lem Wetherbee for his window, and we both withdraw our charges.

CY *(coming down to him angrily)*. No, you don't! You hain't a-gonna make a fool of me that way.

DR. W. Now, Cy, don't get angry. I have been considering this matter from a different standpoint, and I have come to the conclusion that perhaps woman has not had a fair chance in the world. The past century has seen a decided improvement in her condition. There is no doubt that a great force is working in the world in her behalf. I am not quite converted to woman's suffrage, and I don't like this militant business, but let us men not interfere too much. Woman may be working out her own salvation.

FRANCES *(going to him L. C.)*. Thank you, Paul, for those brave and just words.

DR. W. What is your letter, Frances?

FRANCES. A great honor has been conferred upon me. The new League of American Militant Suffragettes have elected me their leader.

DR. W. And your answer?

FRANCES. It will depend upon you. I shall gladly accept if you will return to your practice in the city and let me prove to the world that a woman can be a suffragette and still do her duty to her home and husband. I know I have failed dismally in the past. Will you give me another chance, Paul?

DR. W. I say yes, from my heart.

(Takes her in his arms.)

SOPHIA. Her husband!

FRANCES. Yes. I am engaged to Dr. Wilson. *(Turns to men.)* And now a word with these good men here. Have I not made one convert to the great cause? Cy Jones, don't you really think women ought to have the vote?

CY. Land er Goshen, no!

(FRANCES shrinks back to DR. W.)

SETH *(coming down C.)*. Now, look-a-here, Miss Oliver, it hain't no use talking to us men. We're too sot. We can't cry Votes for Women! just yet. But there's one thing we can cry; but fust let us have all the men in. Come on in, Deacon Penniman. You won't have to give no testimony.

(DEACON looks in up L.)

DEACON *(entering L., and standing up L. C.)*. I hain't got nothing agin the women.

SETH. That's all right, Deacon. You come in, too, Sam Judkins. Guess you must have missed your train over at Millerstown. No need to hide. Hain't gonna be no trial.

SAM *(entering L.)*. I'm glad I missed my train, then.

LUCY ANN *(entering L. down stage and running up stage R. to CAROLINE)*. Where's my ma? I want my ma!

CAROLINE *(folding her in her arms)*. Land sakes. I forgot all about Lucy Ann!

SETH. Now this is what we're a-gonna cry. I'll be blamed but Cy Jones will shout it, too. Now altogether. We're a-goin' to let the women know we admire their spunk. Now, THREE CHEERS FOR WOMEN!

(Men give three rousing cheers and a tiger. At curtain the men stand down L. The women in group in front of bench down R. FRANCES and DR. W. up C.)

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